DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 024 294 FL 001 006

By-Randall, E.S.

Research Results in Three Large Televised FLES Programs.

Pub Date Sep 64

Note-4p.; Paper read at the International Conference on Modern Foreign Language Teaching, West Berlin, September 1964.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.30

Descriptors-*Fles Programs, *Followup Studies, French, Language Instruction, *Language Research, Spanish, Teacher Qualifications, *Teacher Role, *Televised Instruction

Identifiers-Denver-Stanford Project on Instructional TV, Parlons Francais, University of Illinois FI Instruction Project

Three research projects conducted by three major televised FLES programs attempted to assess the effect of follow-up activities by the classroom teacher. The programs involved in the projects were "Parlons Francais," the University of Illinois Foreign Language Instruction Project (Spanish), and the Denver-Stanford Project on the Context of Instructional Television (Spanish). The article gives a capsule description of the design of each project and briefly summarizes the findings in each case, which, in general, indicate that the effect of televised FLES instruction depends greatly on the quality of the classroom follow-up activities. (AF)

ED 024294

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

RESEARCH RESULTS IN THREE LARGE TELEVISED FLES PROGRAMS*

E.S. Randall

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me at the outset disclaim any right to be considered an expert in tests and measurements. This report, if it is to escape the charge of plagiarism, must do so as a digest of research results, stripped of all details and presented, if I am successful, in such a way as to be easily understood by all language teachers, whatever their field of specialization.

The reason for undertaking each of the research projects on which I shall report was the same: Given a television course for teaching a foreign language in the elementary school, what, if any, is the significant effect of follow-up activities by the classroom teacher? Since FLES courses (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) have in the United States come to be widely offered by television, chiefly because of a lack of specialist language teachers, this question of follow-up by non-specialist teachers has become critical.

To the best of my knowledge, there are only three large television FLES programs which have undertaken extensive research programs. The information I am presenting comes from their published reports, although I have also had close association with two of them.

In 1959, Parlons Francais, which I directed for two years, started a three-year, integrated French course for elementary schools by means of television and films. It broadcast two 15-minute lessons a week and recommended a 15-minute follow-up period, directed by the classroom teachers, on the other three days. Since these teachers were at best only moderately fluent in French (many of them, indeed, had studied no French or other foreign language at all), it was very desirable to determine how their follow-up activities could be made most effective. Seven research studies have been conducted having the following chief goals:

1. What is the effect on children's achievement of a moderately fluent vs. a non-fluent classroom teacher?

2. What is the effect of having the teacher use specially prepared recordings exclusively as a model vs. having her conduct her own follow-up practice, including her own modeling of the French exercises?

3. What is the result of providing special televised teacher-improvement programs?

4. What is the value of special recordings made to assist teachers in improving their own ability in French?

FL 001 006

* A paper read at the International Conference on Modern Foreign Language Teaching, West Berlin, September 1964

The most important findings from these studies are:

1. Television instruction in Parlons Francais without follow-up is ineffective.

2. Classes which have 30 minutes or more of follow-up practice each week do significantly better than classes with less.

3. Intelligence test scores are poor predictors of achievement in the first year; they are only moderately good over a two or three year period. A better predictor is the child's overall academic achievement, and equal to this is the child's enthusiasm and willingness to use French orally.

4. Boys' achievement is as good as girls'.

5. Parlons Francais, with follow-up by skilled teachers, is an effective means of teaching French, regardless of the teachers' language background.

6. The televised teacher-training programs do not improve the children's achievement.

7. Children who take Parlons Francais do as well or better in other subjects as those children who do not take it.

8. Some, though by no means all, of the test scores show significant differences favoring classes with moderately fluent teachers. This is particularly true at the third-year level.

9. Enthusiastic and conscientious handling of follow-up by classroom teachers, regardless of linguistic skill, results in consistently higher scores.

A capsule statement of these findings is that the program is effective if the classroom teacher is interested and conducts careful follow-up practice.

The second program I wish to discuss is the University of Illinois Foreign Language Instruction Project. In its four year course, it sought to answer the question: Can acceptable achievement in foreign language learning (Spanish in this instance) be attained by the use of one television lesson a week and four practice sessions in which the classroom teacher uses only recorded material as the stimulus for children's responses? Each daily practice period was twenty minutes long. Control groups were taught by native specialist teachers. At the end of its three-year research program, the experimental group had 34 children in it, the control group 32. This small number of children seems to be the only possible weak point.

It will be noticed that, unlike the approach of Parlons Francais, this Spanish project required its classroom teachers to use only the specially prepared recorded materials to guide the children's practice. Its findings, therefore, do not bear on the possible effectiveness of non-specialist teachers who handle their own follow-up completely.

The research findings, year by year, are as follows:

Year 1: The difference of test scores, though slightly favoring the control group

(taught by the native specialists), was not statistically significant.

Year 2: Most test scores of the control group were now significantly higher. The scores of the experimental group, nevertheless, ranged from 79-98% of those of the control group.

Year 3: Scores again favored the control group except those for listening comprehension and reading comprehension; in these, there was not significant difference. The experimental group's scores now ranged from 69-94% of those of the control group.

The project directors had anticipated that the scores of the group taught by specialist teachers would be higher and had decided in advance that if the experimental group attained scores of at least 60% of those of the control group, the instructional program would be considered successful and its use warranted in schools where qualified specialist language teachers were not available. The scores just given--69-94% of the achievement of the control group--were thus considerably above the 60% level and the program was considered acceptable.

Three additional findings are interesting in view of the research results of Parlons Francais. The Illinois Spanish program found that girls did do significantly better work than boys and that children with high IQ's did achieve significantly higher Spanish scores. I can offer no explanation for these conflicting results. In another important phase, however, the programs had similar findings: The addition of the foreign language program to the school day, even though it took some time away from other subjects, had no significant effect on achievement in those subjects.

The third program to concern us is the Denver-Stanford Project on the Context of Instructional Television. Its basic concern is simply this: Instructional television is only one part of the whole learning process. How can surrounding classroom and home activities best be structured to make a televised FLES program most effective? A four-year project, begun in 1960, is now under way in the schools of the city of Denver, involving over 10,000 fifth and sixth graders studying Spanish.

In its initial year, the Project divided all fifth graders who were to begin the study of Spanish into six groups. There were over 6,000 of them. Group 1 merely saw the televised lessons. Group 2 watched the lessons a second time at home in the evening. Group 3 did the same, but the parents were present during the evening viewing. The other three groups all saw the lessons in school and had various kinds of classroom follow-up activities, directed by their teacher. In one of these groups, dialogs were used as practice material; in a second, pattern practice was the type of exercise; and in the third, called eclectic, both of these were used plus songs and games.

The group which merely viewed the lessons once showed little achievement and was eliminated. This follows the experience of Parlons Francais. In ascending order of pupil achievement, the other groups were: two viewings of the lessons; parents present at the second viewing; dialog practice with teacher; structure drill with teacher; eclectic practice with teacher. In the second semester, a restructuring of the experimental design led to an even more effective combination of evening viewing, parent help, and classroom practice. A particularly interesting and novel point is the motivating effect on children of watching the lessons with their parents

The second year's experimental design was different. Again taking beginners, it set up four groups, each with televised lessons and teacher-directed practice. Group 1 had only these; group 2 had the added help of recordings; group 3 had a second evening viewing; and group 4 had both recordings and a second viewing. Research results showed that the relative effectiveness of the instructional method depended on the classroom teacher's prior training and experience. Teachers with most training and experience did best with no additional activities; middle level teachers did best with recordings; and lowest level teachers did best with a second viewing. In other words, best results depend on the proper combination of the teacher's ability and the additional activities selected.

Pupils in their second year of Spanish began to learn to read and write. Some started reading and writing at the beginning of the year, some in the middle of it. Contrary to expectations, it was found that pupils who started reading and writing at the beginning of the year scored higher in audio-lingual results than those who began only in the second semester. In other words, reading and writing did not interfere with understanding and speaking; to the contrary. It was further found that, at the end of the year, there was no significant difference in achievement between pupils who had had teacher-directed reading and writing practice and those who had used an automated, self-instructional course.

From this summary--and I apologize for its complexity--it is evident that the Denver-Stanford Project is probing deeply into many areas of learning activities which do, or might, occur after the television set is turned off. We are here very far from the concept of letting the machine do all the work and it is evident how little foundation there is to the fear that television will replace teachers. On the contrary--and here the findings of all three research projects agree--evidence mounts up that only with the aid of teachers can television be an effective means of teaching FLES. I would put beside this fact, as being equally important to instructional television in general, the thought that new trails must be blazed if we are to find the most suitable follow-up procedures and to train teachers to use them. It will require much time, patience, money, and the breaking down of many traditions in our tradition-heavy field and indeed in the whole profession of teaching. But the research evidence is, I submit, a clear indication that it can be done.